

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 227633 TOSEC 270133

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, EG

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM: A STRATEGY FOR TALKS WITH THE
ISRAELIS ON THE GULF OF SUEZ, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

(S/S NO.7619410)

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON THROUGH HABIB

1. THE PROBLEM.

THE TALKS WE HAVE AGREED TO HOLD WITH THE ISRAELIS OVER THE
GULF OF SUEZ PROBLEM ARE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN AT 9:30 A.M.

THIS THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16. THESE DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN
EXPEDITED SO THAT WE COULD DEAL WITH AMOCO'S MOST PRESSING
PROBLEM, THE NEED TO BEGIN DRILLING AT SITE 304.1 BEFORE
SEPTEMBER 21 WHEN THE CONCESSION MIGHT OTHERWISE EXPIRE.

IT APPEARS THAT DINITZ WILL HEAD AN ISRAELI TWOSOME FROM
JERUSALEM--EPPY EVRON AND ONE OTHER OFFICER. WE URGENTLY
NEED YOUR APPROVAL FOR THE FOLLOWING APPROACH--OBJECTIVES,
NEGOTIATING STRATEGY, AND OPENING TALKING POINTS--WE WISH
TO TAKE WITH THE ISRAELIS.

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2. US OBJECTIVES

NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES: OUR IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IN TALKING
TO THE ISRAELIS THIS THURSDAY WILL BE TO GAIN THEIR COOPERA-

TION ON AMOCO'S PROJECTED DRILLING OPERATIONS EAST OF THE

MEDIAN LINE IN THE GULF OF SUEZ IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, BEGINNING IMMEDIATELY WITH SITE 304.1. BASED ON OUR TALKS TODAY WITH AMOCO, ITS PLANS ARE SUFFICIENTLY LIMITED THAT WE BELIEVE ISRAEL MAY ACQUIESCE IN THEM. WE DO NOT BELIEVE ISRAEL WILL AGREE TO 304.1 UNTIL IT KNOWS WHAT ELSE AMOCO HAS IN MIND. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS MIGHT BE ACHIEVED BY OUTLINING AMOCO'S FUTURE INTENTIONS. WE HOPE IN THIS WAY TO RESOLVE THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF AMOCO'S RETURNING TO SITE 304.1 BEFORE THE SEPTEMBER 21 DEADLINE. WE BELIEVE ACHIEVING ISRAEL'S NON-INTERFERENCE WITH FUTURE AMOCO OPERATIONS AS EXPLAINED TO US BY THE COMPANY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO EGYPT AS WELL. THE PARAMOUNT CONSIDERATION IN REACHING ANY UNDERSTANDING WITH THE ISRAELIS WILL BE NOT TO AGREE OR APPEAR TO ACQUIESCE IN THEIR DRILLING IN THE GULF OF SUEZ. SUCH ACQUIESCENCE WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO EGYPT AND LEGALLY OBJECTIONABLE TO AMOCO; IT WOULD VIOLATE OUR OWN LEGAL POSITION AS WELL AS OUR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES IN THE AREA. NOR WOULD WE WANT TO RECOGNIZE EXPLICITLY AN ISRAELI RIGHT TO GRANT OR WITHHOLD CONSENT FOR AMOCO OPERATIONS.

3. B. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES:

OUR OVERRIDING INTEREST IN HELPING RESOLVE THIS DISPUTE IS TO AVOID A SERIOUS POLITICAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL OVER THE GULF OF SUEZ. FAHMY'S RECENT DARK HINTS THAT WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE GULF OF SUEZ AND THE ISRAELIS POSITION THAT THEY WILL NOT PERMIT THEIR OCCUPATION RIGHTS TO BE ALTERED WITHOUT NEGOTIATIONS, PROVIDE ALL THE INGREDIENTS FOR SUCH A CONFRONTATION. A SHOWDOWN OVER THE GULF OF SUEZ PROBLEM COULD RESULT IN:

-- A POTENTIAL UNRAVELING OF SINAI II (FAHMY HAS WARNED THAT EGYPT COULD EMPLOY A NUMBER OF RETALIATORY MEASURES
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AGAINST THE ISRAELIS, INCLUDING NOT PERMITTING THEIR CARGO THROUGH THE CANAL);

-- A LOSS OF CREDIBILITY WITH THE EGYPTIANS IF WE ARE UNABLE TO AFFECT ISRAELI BEHAVIOR;

-- A CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL AT A BAD TIME.

4. II. THE OBJECTIVES OF OTHER PARTIES

A. ISRAELI OBJECTIVES: ISRAEL'S OBJECTIVES SEEM TO BE FORMED BY AN UNCOMFORTABLE MARRIAGE OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LONGER-RANGE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THIS LATEST AND MOST SERIOUS SERIES

OF INCIDENTS IN MAY, IT HAS BEEN CLEAR THAT THERE HAVE BEEN

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT OVER AMOCO'S OPERATIONS EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE. IN A NUMBER OF INSTANCES WE HAVE RECEIVED CONFUSED AND CONTRADICTIONARY SIGNALS FROM THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. READING BETWEEN THE LINES, IT APPEARS THAT PERES HAS SUPPORTED A TOUGH ISRAELI POSITION ON AMOCO'S OPERATIONS AGAINST ALLON AND POSSIBLY RABIN'S MORE CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE. GIVEN THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PRE-ELECTION MANEUVERINGS IN ISRAEL, RABIN IS PROBABLY MORE THAN UNUSUALLY SENSITIVE TO PERES' OUTFLANKING HIM TO THE RIGHT. CONSEQUENTLY, HE MAY BE TAKING A HARDER POSITION THAN HE WISHES TO. THERE IS A SUGGESTION IN WHAT RABIN AND ALLON HAVE SAID THAT ISRAEL IS LOOKING FOR SOME GRACEFUL WAY OF PERMITTING AMOCO'S OPERATIONS, AT SITE 304.1, AND PERHAPS AT OTHER SITES EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE, TO GO FORWARD. THE TALKS INCREASINGLY SEEM DESIGNED TO PROVIDE RABIN A FACE-SAVING DEVICE BY FULFILLING ISRAEL'S STATED REQUIREMENT OF BEING CONSULTED ABOUT AND CONSENTING TO AMOCO'S ACTIVITIES AND THUS PERMIT CONCILIATORY ISRAELI ACTIONS WHICH WILL BE POLITICALLY DEFENSIBLE AT HOME.

5. THE HOLDING OF THESE TALKS ALONE MAY BE OF SUFFICIENT POLITICAL ASSISTANCE TO RABIN TO ENABLE HIM TO AGREE TO A SOLUTION WHICH WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO US WHILE NOT INJURING HIS POLITICAL POSITION DOMESTICALLY, BUT ISRAEL DOES HAVE CERTAIN DESIDERATA WHICH THE VISITING ISRAELI TEAM MAY PUSH
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WITH US. ISRAEL'S PRIMARY NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO GET US TO ACCEPT ITS ASSERTION THAT IT IS IN CONTROL OF THE WATERS EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE AND THAT NOTHING CAN GO FORWARD WITHOUT ITS PERMISSION. THE ISRAELIS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO MAKE THIS POINT BY FORCING ACQUIESCENCE IN THEIR PROHIBITION ON DRILLING AT SITE 304.1 IN ADVANCE OF THE TALKS.

6. ISRAEL'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES IN GETTING US TO ACCEPT ITS POSITION ARE TO:

-- PROTECT WHAT IT NOW CONSIDERS ITS RIGHTS AS AN OCCUPYING POWER AND TO PREVENT ANY DEROGATION FROM THESE RIGHTS IN THE ABSENCE OF FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EGYPTIANS;

-- TO EXPLOIT FOR ITSELF THE MINERALS ON THE GULF OF SUEZ SEABED OUT TO THE MEDIAN LINE (AN ISSUE WHICH WE WILL PROBABLY NOT WANT TO INTRODUCE DURING OUR TALKS WITH THE TEAM).

7. UNLESS THE TALKS PROVE OTHERWISE, WE WILL WORK ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT ONE OF ISRAEL'S KEY INTERESTS AT THIS TIME IS TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. THIS

MAY BE THE STRONGEST AND PERHAPS THE ONLY READILY AVAILABLE

LEVERAGE WE HAVE WITH THE ISRAELIS SHORT OF USING THE POTENTIAL COERCIVE POWER OF LIMITING U.S. ASSISTANCE OR SUPPORT. WE BELIEVE RABIN'S INTEREST IS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO ENABLE US TO BRING ABOUT AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE SOLUTION.

8. B. EGYPTIAN OBJECTIVES :

EGYPT'S CENTRAL CONCERNS IN THE GULF OF SUEZ ARE MORE ECONOMIC AT THIS TIME THAN POLITICAL. THE POLITICAL DIMENSIONS WHICH THIS DISPUTE HAS ASSUMED ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF ISRAEL'S CHALLENGE TO EGYPT'S ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN THE GULF. THE EGYPTIANS WOULD LIKE TO:

-- ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE OF UNHINDERED AMOCO OPERATIONS IN ITS CONCESSION AREAS. (EGYPT IS COUNTING ON AMOCO TO HELP IT REALIZE ITS GOAL OF A ONE-MILLION-BARREL-A-DAY
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OIL PRODUCTION BY 1980);

-- KEEP ISRAEL FROM DRILLING IN THE GULF OF SUEZ.

ALTHOUGH THESE ARE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES, EGYPT WOULD PROBABLY ACQUIESCE IN A SITUATION IN WHICH AMOCO WOULD OBSERVE SOME PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS BUT ONES WHICH WOULD NOT PREVENT AMOCO'S OPERATION FROM GOING FORWARD AS PLANNED FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. DESPITE THE EGYPTIAN ASSERTION THAT IT EXERCISES SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL OF THE GULF OF SUEZ, IN PRACTICE THE EGYPTIANS HAVE DRAWN DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN ZONES IN THE GULF OF SUEZ AND HAVE APPEARED TO ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE THAT MOST OF THE AREAS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE MEDIAN LINE CANNOT BE EXPLOITED AT THIS TIME. WITH MINOR EXCEPTIONS THE EGYPTIANS HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THE INACCESSIBILITY TO AMOCO OF ITS EAST-OF-THE-MEDIAN-LINE CONCESSION AREAS, THUS PRESERVING AMOCO'S RIGHTS IN THESE CONCESSIONS FOR THE TIME BEING.

IN OUR JUDGMENT WE COULD MEET THE MINIMUM EGYPTIAN OBJECTIVES BY PROVIDING FOR:

-- AN IMMEDIATE RETURN OF AMOCO TO SITE 304.1;

-- THE UNHINDERED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALREADY ESTABLISHED RAMADAN AND MORGAN FIELDS, WHICH WOULD INVOLVE SOME DRILLING EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE IN PRE-1967 CONCESSION AREAS AS ISRAEL HAD BEEN TOLERATING FOR YEARS UNTIL THIS SUMMER;

-- AND OTHER PLANNED AMOCO OPERATIONS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS WHICH ONLY INTRUDE marginally TO THE EAST OF

THE MEDIAN LINE (LESS THAN A MILE), ARE ALL IN PRE-1967 CONCESSION AREAS, AND ARE ALMOST ALL IN CONNECTION WITH FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING OIL FIELDS.

9. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE THURSDAY TALKS ARE THE BEST MOMENT OR FORUM TO DISCUSS ISRAELI DRILLING OPERATIONS IN

THE GULF OF SUEZ, EVEN THOUGH THIS ISSUE IS OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE EGYPTIANS AND OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE TO US. FOR THE MOMENT, WE CAN MEET EGYPTIAN OBJECTIVES BY ADDRESSING SUCCESSFULLY THE HARASSMENT PROBLEM.

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10. C. AMOCO'S OBJECTIVES.

WE HAVE JUST MET TODAY WITH AMOCO EXECUTIVES AND HAVE REVIEWED WITH THEM THEIR PLANS AND OBJECTIVES IN THE GULF OF SUEZ FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. AMOCO TAKES A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO ITS PROBLEMS IN THE GULF AND APPEARS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR TAKING A SIMILAR APPROACH WITH THE ISRAELIS. WHILE EMPHASIZING THAT SUCH AN APPROACH CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ALTER THE COMPANY'S LEGAL POSITION--WHICH IS THAT AMOCO HAS THE RIGHT TO OPERATE IN ALL OF ITS PRE-AND POST-1967 CONCESSION AREAS IN THE GULF--AMOCO WOULD BE SATISFIED WITH:

-- BEING ABLE TO BEGIN DRILLING AT SITE 304.1 BEFORE THE SEPTEMBER 21 DEADLINE;

-- FURTHER EXPLOITATION OF BLOCK 304 SHOULD DRILLING AT 304.1 RESULT IN AN OIL FIND;

-- TOTAL FREEDOM OF OPERATIONS IN THE RAMADAN AND MORGAN FIELDS;

-- THE OPPORTUNITY TO DRILL ON THE EAST SIDE OF TWO BLOCKS--IN A SOUTHERN (PRE-1967) CONCESSION AREA--WHICH STRADDLE THE MEDIAN LINE.

11. WE BELIEVE THE COMPANY'S OBJECTIVES ARE REALIZABLE. ALL OF THE AREAS IN WHICH AMOCO IS INTERESTED IN THE PERIOD AHEAD ARE IN THE PRE-1967 CONCESSION. THE COMPANY ATTACHES GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO ITS OPERATIONS IN THE RAMADAN AND MORGAN OIL FIELDS. SINCE THE ISRAELIS HAVE NOT MADE THESE OPERATIONS AN ISSUE AND HAVE NOT HARASSED THEM UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, WE SEE NO REASON WHY THIS SHOULD BECOME A PROBLEM AT THIS TIME. THE FEW OTHER AREAS IN WHICH AMOCO MAY DRILL ARE marginally over the median line and should not be an obstacle to an understanding with ISRAEL.

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12. III. NEGOTIATING STRATEGY.

A. SETTING.

RABIN HAS INDICATED TO TOON THAT HE HOPES TO FIND A PRACTICAL SOLUTION, AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING TEAM SEEMS TO SUPPORT THIS INDICATION.

THE VERY ACT OF OUR CONSULTING WITH ISRAEL OVER THE GULF OF SUEZ MAY BE AN IMPORTANT GESTURE ON OUR PART IN REACHING A SOLUTION. TO TEST THIS HYPOTHESIS, WE WILL LAY OUT OUR POSITION WITH FIRMNESS, BUT APPROACH OUR DISCUSSIONS ON A PRACTICAL BASIS, AS AN EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION THROUGH WHICH WE COULD ESTABLISH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE ISRAELIS RATHER THAN AS A MORE FORMAL NEGOTIATING SITUATION WHICH WOULD ESTABLISH A WIN-LOSS PSYCHOLOGY AND THE NEED FOR AN AGREEMENT.

SHOULD THESE ASSUMPTIONS PROVE TO BE INCORRECT, WE WOULD SEEK YOUR FURTHER GUIDANCE.

13. B. SCENARIO

PHIL HABIB WOULD OPEN THE TALKS WITH A STATEMENT (WE HAVE INCLUDED DRAFT TALKING POINTS IN THE NEXT SECTION) WHICH WOULD BOTH SET THE TONE FOR OUR DISCUSSIONS AND WHICH WOULD CONVEY TO THE ISRAELIS WHAT WE SEEK AS AN OUTCOME OF OUR TALKS TOGETHER. ATHERTON WOULD THEN CONDUCT DETAILED TALKS WITH THE ISRAELIS.

AFTER THE OPENING STATEMENT WE WOULD MOVE TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION WITH THE ISRAELIS ON AMOCO'S FUTURE OPERATIONS. WE WOULD ASK ISRAEL TO GIVE US AN APPRECIATION OF THEIR EXPECTATION ON AMOCO'S EAST-OF-THE-MEDIAN-LINE OPERATIONS. SINCE WE BELIEVE AMOCO'S PROJECTED ACTIVITIES ARE WELL WITHIN ISRAEL'S LIMITS, WE WOULD HOPE TO OBTAIN ISRAELI COMMITMENT TO NON-INTERFERENCE AT THAT POINT BY INFORMING THEM OF AMOCO'S PROJECTED OPERATIONS.

FINALLY, WE COULD AGREE WITH THE ISRAELIS ON A COMMON PRESS POSITION ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

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--THE TALKS WERE PART OF ONGOING DISCUSSIONS WE HAD BEEN HAVING WITH ISRAEL OVER THE PAST MONTHS;

--AS TWO FRIENDLY NATIONS WE HAD MET TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHERS' POSITION;

--WE HAD EXCHANGED INFORMATION AND HAVE ESTABLISHED A PRACTICAL BASIS FOR AVOIDING PROBLEMS IN RESPECT TO AMOCO'S FUTURE OPERATIONS IN THE GULF OF SUEZ.

WE COULD EXPECT THE ISRAELI'S TO SUBSEQUENTLY PLAY THE MEETING AS HAVING ESTABLISHED THE PRINCIPLE THAT THEY MUST BE CONSULTED ON AMOCO OPERATIONS EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE.

WE WOULD OF COURSE DISASSOCIATE OURSELVES FROM THAT LINE WITHOUT, HOWEVER, BEING CONTENTIOUS UNLESS ISRAELI PUBLICITY FORCED US TO SET FORTH OUR VIEWS MORE SPECIFICALLY.

14. IV. TALKING POINTS

WE SUGGEST THAT THE FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS BE USED AS A GUIDE TO PHIL HABIB'S OPENING STATEMENT:

--WE APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY OF MEETING HERE TODAY WITH THE ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVES TO ACHIEVE ON AN URGENT BASIS AN UNDERSTANDING REGARDING AMOCO'S OPERATIONS IN THE GULF OF SUEZ.

--WE RECOGNIZE THAT OUR COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERING LEGAL POSITIONS ON THIS MATTER. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO APPROACH THE DISCUSSIONS TODAY ON A PRACTICAL BASIS AND IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WHICH HAS ALWAYS CHARACTERIZED THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE COOPERATION WE SEEK WOULD BE CHARACTERIZED BY AN UNDERSTANDING THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS A FUNDAMENTAL OBLIGATION TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF AN AMERICAN COMPANY TO PURSUE ITS LEGITIMATE PEACEFUL OPERATIONS. WE CAN IN NO FASHION AGREE THAT THERE IS A LEGITIMATE BASIS TO THE HARASSMENT WHICH AMOCO HAS ENDURED OVER THE COURSE OF THE LAST FEW MONTHS.

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--OUR BEING HERE TOGETHER TODAY INDICATES TO ME THAT THERE EXISTS A STRONG MUTUAL DESIRE TO AVOID EXAGGERATING WHAT HAS OCCURRED AND TO PUT AN END TO A POTENTIAL CONFRONTATION THAT CAN NEITHER SERVE ISRAELI OR AMERICAN INTERESTS. INDEED, SINCE AMOCO'S PLANS ARE MODEST IN SCOPE THERE SHOULD BE NO DISPUTE OVER THEM.

--WE HAVE TAKEN PAINS IN THE PAST TO EXPLAIN THAT WHILE WE DO NOT AGREE WITH ISRAEL'S LEGAL POSITION, WE WOULD NOT JOIN IN ANY EFFORT TO PORTRAY AMOCO'S OPERATIONS EAST OF THE ISRAELI-CLAIMED MEDIAN LINE AS EVIDENCE THAT THE SITE LIES OUTSIDE ISRAELI JURISDICTION. AT EVERY STAGE WE HAVE SOUGHT TO PROTECT AMOCO'S LEGITIMATE OPERATIONS WITHOUT FORCING ANY PARTY TO PREJUDICE ITS POSITION. WE

CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS THE BEST BASIS FOR
ACHIEVING AN UNDERSTANDING.

--WE MUST ADDRESS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY AMOCO'S RETURN TO
SITE 304.1. IF AMOCO IS TO MEET ITS CONTRACTUAL OBLIGA-
TIONS AND AVOID HAVING ITS CONCESSION IN THAT AREA, GRANTED

BY EGYPT IN 1964, CANCELLED, IT MUST BEGIN DRILLING BY
SEPTEMBER 21. THIS REQUIRES THAT AMOCO BEGIN ITS OPERA-
TIONS NO LATER THAN TOMORROW. THE ISSUE WILL NOT ALLOW FOR
DELAY. WE UNDERSTAND ISRAEL WANTS TO KNOW FIRST WHAT ELSE
AMOCO HAS IN MIND AND ARE PREPARED TO DESCRIBE THAT NOW.

--I THEREFORE SUGGEST THAT THE SPECIFIC ISSUE OF AMOCO'S
DRILLING AT SITE 304.1 BE DISPOSED OF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
AND EQUALLY RESOLVE THE OTHER MATTERS, HOPEFULLY CON-
CLUDING OUR DISCUSSIONS TODAY.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT YOU APPROVE THE PROPOSED APPROACH TO OUR TALKS WITH
THE ISRAELIS.

APPROVE DISAPPROVE

THAT YOU APPROVE THE TALKING POINTS FOR PHIL HABIB'S
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OPENING STATEMENT.

APPROVE DISAPPROVE

16. DRAFTED: NEA/IAI:MDSTERNBERG APPROVED: P:PHABIB

CONCURRENCES: NEA:ALATHERTON L/NEA:DSMALL
S:HCOLLUMS
ROBINSON

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